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NEWS

NEW STUDY ON CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS IDENTIFIES POLICY SUPPORTS TO ADDRESS RACIAL INEQUITIES AND CALIFORNIA'S ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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*****This release is EMBARGOED until 11:59 p.m. EST on Tuesday, Nov. 13*****

STANFORD, CA — At a time when the achievement gap in California is large and appears unchanging, some high schools are beating the odds. How these schools are accomplishing this and how their approaches can inform state policy so that more schools can realize the same success is the focus of a study being released by the School Redesign Network at Stanford University (SRN) and Justice Matters in San Francisco.

The study — *High Schools for Equity: Policy Supports for Student Learning in Communities of Color* — focuses on five urban, public high schools from across the state that have no selective admissions requirements, serve primarily students of color and low-income students, graduate students at higher rates than the state average, and send more than 80% of them to college. These five are not the only high schools succeeding against the odds, but they represent the types of educational approaches required to close California's educational achievement gap and to enable all students to move on to successful career and college pathways.

The findings from the study will be released Tuesday, November 13, during the California Department of Education's Achievement Gap Summit in Sacramento. The presentation will be led by Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University and Co-Executive Director of SRN, which conducted the study.

"These schools break the conventional links between race, poverty, and academic failure," says Darling-Hammond. "Not only do their students receive an academically rigorous curriculum that prepares them for college and careers, they also experience learning opportunities that are culturally rich, socially and practically relevant, and responsive to their needs and interests. *High Schools for Equity* identifies and describes the work of these pioneering schools and districts, which can be adopted and adapted by educators in similar contexts across California and the country and supported by policymakers."

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"The kind of success we've seen in these schools is exceptional, but not unattainable," says Olivia Araiza, Program Director of Justice Matters. "Even though they face the same challenges of most of California's large urban schools they are graduating their students in remarkably high numbers and sending them to college at rates more than twice the state average. This study hones in on the practices at these schools that are making such extraordinary success possible, and helps us to see how these practices can be scaled up statewide."

What distinguishes these schools is their design and pedagogy. Traditional schools assign thousands of students to a single building, send them to a different teacher for each 50-minute class period, assign teachers to 150 or more students (this ratio is over 200 in some California cities), and provide little time for teachers to plan and work together. The design features of the schools in this study include small, personalized learning environments; rigorous and relevant curricula that provide authentic learning and assessment opportunities; and extensive, regular opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn with one another in improving their practice.

The schools in the study are:

- Animo Inglewood Charter High School, Inglewood (Green Dot Public Schools)
- Leadership High School, San Francisco (independent charter)
- June Jordan School for Equity, San Francisco Unified School District
- New Tech High School, Sacramento Unified School District (supported by the New Tech Schools Foundation)
- Stanley E. Foster Construction Tech Academy, San Diego Unified School District

This study focuses on policy conditions and supports that help to create and sustain these and other successful urban schools. "Low-income students and students of color in California are more likely than others to attend under-resourced schools that are racially and socio-economically segregated, staffed with under-qualified teachers, unable to offer college preparatory courses or strong technical education programs, and where graduation is not the norm," says Darling-Hammond. "The work the schools in our study are doing is exceptional and occurs against the odds. Their successes can be replicated, but only if California implements substantive policy changes."

Specifically, these changes include:

- Investments in teacher preparation and development to enable the kinds of pedagogical strategies and advisement responsibilities teachers have taken on in these new models;
- School leader recruitment and development to help principals learn how to design and manage organizations in which their instructional leadership, organizational design, and change management skills are critically important;
- Support for a system of curriculum, assessment, and instruction that encourages the development of 21st century skills and enables a curriculum that is intellectually rigorous as well as socially and practically relevant;
- Funding streams that are sufficiently flexible to enable strategic investments in innovative approaches at the school level; and
- Financial support that enables college access to become a reality for low-income and undocumented students.

See specific policy recommendations, below.

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For interviews and further information

The study is available online at <http://www.srnleads.org/press/news/hsfe.html>.

Darling-Hammond will be presenting on the study at the Achievement Gap Summit in Sacramento, CA, on Tuesday, November 13, at 10:15 a.m. Following the presentation, Darling-Hammond and others, including principals and students from some schools in the study, will be available to speak with reporters. For more information, visit:

http://www.srnleads.org/resources/tools/ags_recc_reading.html or

<http://www.sjcoe.org/summit/index.aspx>.

For interviews with study authors, please contact Barbara McKenna at 831.460.9933 or bmckenna@stanford.edu.

The School Redesign Network (SRN LEADS): SRN and its affiliate program, Leadership, Equity & Accountability in Districts & Schools (LEADS), are based at Stanford University. Its mission is to help create, support, and sustain equitable schools that are intellectually rigorous, high performing and provide *all* students access to the knowledge and skills needed for success in college, career, and citizenship.

Justice Matters (JM): JM is a non-profit social-justice organization that strategically participates in statewide education-policy change efforts and supports community organizations in their campaigns for just and equitable school systems. Research from this project will inform the development of JM's policy agenda that aims to improve educational outcomes and experiences among students of color.

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HIGH SCHOOLS FOR EQUITY POLICY FINDINGS

The study identifies five policy areas that have major influences on the ability of high schools to construct the practices that enable our most under-served students to succeed:

- organization and governance policies
- human capital
- curriculum and assessment
- funding
- postsecondary education policies

Specific recommendations are listed below.

Organization and governance policies

1. Expand grants to support new schools and small learning communities that offer designs which promise to attend more effectively to students' needs and increase their success. The state should also create a means for documenting and sharing effective school organizational and instructional practices through clearinghouses and networks that allow schools to learn from each other.

Human capital policies

Teachers: Pre- and Inservice

1. Provide financial subsidies for high quality pre-service preparation for candidates who will teach in high-need schools. This would include reinstating and expanding service scholarships and forgivable loans for individuals who prepare to teach in low-income schools, with special incentives for high-need teachers with language skills and content backgrounds in short supply.
2. Provide support for improving the capacity of teacher education programs to provide a foundation in the skills that teachers most need to provide rigorous, relevant, and responsive education to low-income students of color.
3. Restore funding for at least 10 days of professional development time each year. As was once the case in California and is now the case in other states and high-achieving nations, the state should fund learning time for teachers. Schools should have the flexibility to determine how to use this time throughout the year.
4. Provide adequate, stable support for high-quality professional development in areas teachers need to be effective. This would include increasing support for the California Subject Matter Projects as well as funding much more extensive high quality professional development for teaching English language learners.

5. Support training for professional development providers and mentors to make sure they have the opportunity to learn about successful methods of teaching students of color and English language learners, and to help other teachers acquire these skills.
6. Support the adoption of school models that provide time for teacher planning and collaboration. The state should sponsor both incentive grants for school redesign and a “best practices” clearinghouse that shares models of school organization and instructional practice with other schools.

Leadership

1. Proactively recruit dynamic future leaders into the principal pipeline by subsidizing training, including paid internships, for candidates who have strong instructional and leadership capacities and who reflect California’s students.
2. Provide support for systematically improving principal preparation programs, specifically organizing clinical experiences and content that prepare principals to lead in schools that are organized very differently from traditional schools.
3. Restore the California School Leadership Academy which was eliminated in 2003, despite its substantial success. The Academy’s offerings should include mentoring and coaching specific to beginning principals, and training on the specific learning needs of students of color and English language learners.

Curriculum and assessment policies

1. Rethink the A-G curriculum requirements to more fully acknowledge modern conceptions of learning and curriculum, including interdisciplinary and applied learning that incorporates new technologies.
2. Redesign the assessment system to better assess and encourage applications of knowledge and skill in performance assessments at the state and local level, including appropriate assessments for English language learners.

Funding policies

1. Increase funding for schools by establishing a weighted student funding formula in which funds follow the child, and additional funding is allocated for students with the greatest needs, thus ensuring that funds are distributed more equitably.
2. Create less fragmented funding streams. Aside from major categorical programs intended to address specific population needs (e.g., special education, English language learner funding), reduce the number of small categorical programs and roll funds into core funding through the weighted student formula, so that schools have more flexibility to align funding to their instructional mission.

3. Create a more consistent and stable approach to funding facilities. To address the unstable facilities funding that undermines rational planning, drives up facilities costs, and is unfair to low-wealth districts, the state needs to create funding streams that draw more predictably on the general fund and are less dependent on local bonds, with regular allocations to districts that include the needs of charter schools.

Postsecondary education policies

1. **Reinvest in higher education** to keep the public university systems affordable, accessible, and high-quality. The state should set goals and targets for increasing access to higher education in line with the growing number of jobs requiring a college degree, and should invest in higher education funding that both enhances quality and guarantees the number of student slots needed to keep pace.
2. **Increase student financial aid and put the Dream Act into law.** An increase in Cal Grants to previous levels should be accompanied by signing of the twice-passed Dream Act, which would allow all California students to be eligible for financial aid and in-state tuition at state colleges they have earned the right to attend.